

## Commendations for *Alternative Futures: India Unshackled*

Can a radically different and progressive future India emerge, overcoming the systemic injustices – economic, ecological, political, social, cultural – of today? Any such seemingly utopian vision to become feasible must show that it is workable and reachable. The great strength of this book, making it a must read, is that it does both. It points to different experiences in India that already embody the values and actual practices that are needed for such functionality. And it looks at the struggles of various social actors whose coming together could forge the collective agency that makes this project achievable.

**Achin Vanaik**

*Retired Professor of International Relations and Global Politics, University of Delhi*

This is an important book. Today, when stable social structures as we knew them are engulfed in change and decay, there is sometimes an attempt to seek isolated explanations for the chaos in economic, ecological and cultural causation. This book makes a refreshing attempt to focus on intersectionalities of many paradigms to both understand the dysfunction of our present lives, as well as engage with a possible convivial future. Several of the writers have demonstrated alternatives that are eminently doable, and these will be major sources of strength and positive energy as we move into the future.

**Iliana Sen**

*Feminist activist and scholar, Mumbai*

Envisioning the future of a rapidly changing world needs a global understanding. This is a difficult task. As humanity enters the era of Econocene in which the market has become the changemaker, local understandings based on close links with both past and present can help shape human futures along alternative avenues. This book is a bold attempt towards such a task, across an impressive array of subjects and themes that have the much needed explicit and implicit interconnections. This makes the book globally significant.

**Jayanta Bandyopadhyay**

*Former Professor, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta*

Humans are integral to nature. What distinguishes them is the capacity to introspect and an awareness of being the symbol of a larger truth in nature. When nature's elements are in harmony, the world is a better place. Our aim is to raise our consciousness to this fact – which is what the contributors to this book have attempted to do. I cannot wait to read it in full.

**Leela Samson**

*Dancer, choreographer, teacher*

*Alternative Futures* is about the future of humankind and I am a woman of the present, forged by the past and wary of the future. How can I blurb/blurt about this book. There is a word in English: 'pipe dream'. It ostensibly means delusions borne of smoking opium. But there is something more to it. A pipe which is a kind of a tunnel that always opens towards the light.

This real light at the end of the tunnel makes all the contributors to this volume write not in vague general terms but in concrete specific terms. It's interesting to read authors who are otherwise steeped in the murky present talking longingly about the future. I congratulate both the editors for coming up with this book. It's obvious that their activist-theorist background has immensely contributed to making of the *Alternative Futures*.

**Pradnya Pawar**

*Marathi poet & writer, Mumbai*

Perhaps for the first time, it is possible for human beings to reach far beyond their basic needs and build a decent society – not just for a few but for everyone. The day has come to dream big and work hard: to sweep away poverty, injustice, caste, patriarchy, violence, exploitation, and also to build the institutions of liberty, equality, solidarity and sustainability. This enlightening collection, written by some of India's finest thinkers and activists, opens our eyes to these new horizons. It also tells us about the sterling efforts that are already being made, away from the glaze of the mainstream media, to build an alternative future. Essential reading for all those who believe that another world is possible.

**Jean Drèze**

*Honorary Professor, Delhi School of Economics*

Being caught up in everyday crises that demand urgent attention, compelled to work in fields of power with alien rules and tools, can we imagine other, better worlds? In this salutary set of essays, some of India's leading activists and scholars look past our preoccupation with the present towards visions of ecologically and socially just futures. Like all dreams that have inspired concerted action, they deserve our keenest consideration.

**Amita Baviskar**

*Professor of Sociology, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi*

This book is timely when India is facing an economic, political and social crisis and its people seem to despair and ask "where do we go from here?" The authors, well known in their own fields, try to answer these questions that may not solve all the problems but give a sense of direction to the journey ahead. This book should thus become a text book for ongoing reflection on the future of India.

**Walter Fernandes**

*Writer & researcher, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati*

A fantastic group of authors and editors delineate an optimistic future for India, a practical utopia which is also an inspiration for the rest of the world. Drawing on ancient wisdom and institutions, progressive ideologies, years of activism, and latest contributions from diverse sciences, this book analyzes what could be done across the full range of human endeavour, from basic needs to governance to justice and sustainability.

**Joan Martinez Alier**

*Ecological economist, Autonomous University of Barcelona*

At time of rapid economic change with far reaching, often irreversible consequences, it is refreshing to find two seasoned practitioners and thinkers on alternative modes of development join forces and suggest ways ahead for a society as complex as India's. Even those who differ with specifics of the cases examined and the arguments advanced will not be able to ignore this work. It is especially welcome as it straddles many divisions, between human and natural sciences, advocacy and constructive action and between local and national arenas. The issues of the environment could not be de-linked from the wider quest for social justice and an inclusive societal order but here they are seen as integral in a host of ways. Reading and engaging with this book will be a richly rewarding experience.

**Mahesh Rangarajan**

*Professor of History and Environmental Studies, Ashoka University, Sonapat*

To enact radical socio-ecological transformations, we first need to imagine them. This is what this book brilliantly does, it decolonizes our imaginary! These are the futures I wanna live, what about you?

**Federico Demaria**

*Editor of "Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era"*

Young people of India, please read this book. Please have a dialogue about the ideas in this book. Don't pre-judge them. Some may seem old fashioned, some utopian, some too new or radical. But these ideas come from men and women who have spent decades trying to build your country and your future. In some cases, they have been tested on the ground directly; in others, they have been recovered from the past or borrowed from times to come. Use the multicoloured strands in this volume, for tomorrow is yours to weave.

**Rohini Nilekani**

*Chair, Arghyam, Bengaluru*

This is a timely publication, capturing collective wisdom of varied social movements over the last 40 years. Veteran activist researchers from environment, political, progressive cultural, women's rights and human rights movements have critically reflected on the dynamics of their struggles and provided future vision. Their analysis is informed by right based perspective and commitment for striving for entitlements of the marginalized sections of society. This insightful work will help all those who want to build a society based on foundations of social justice, gender justice, environmental justice and distributive justice. This reader will provide food for thought, debate, discussion for study circles to strengthen social sector, civil society initiatives and development studies.

**Vibhuti Patel**

*Chair, Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*

*Alternative Futures: India Unshackled* aims to instill the notion that futures are always open and multiple. Faced with the closure of a future with futures by the present ideologies of growth, modernization and development – as the only possible or credible paths to an allegedly single future of wealth and material abundance for all – the authors of this courageous and farsighted volume enlighten those of us searching for alternative ways of living worldwide on many aspects of the cultural and ecological transitions our societies need to undergo in order to preserve and enhance the pluriverse. From environmental governance to radical democracy, from craft to agroecology, from water to education and much more this volume provides concrete tools and ideas for moving effectively toward post-patriarchal, post-capitalist and pluriversal worlds. *India Unshackled* is the product of the South Asian dissenting imagination at its best; it shows why the task of liberating the future from its modernist shackles is one of the most radical goals and acts of imagination critical theory and activism can pursue at present.

**Arturo Escobar**

*Professor of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

This is an indispensable collection in which eminent practitioner-intellectuals distill the debates on a range of new issues – socio-cultural justice, political practice, ecological and economic priorities – that demand engagement in the anthropocene. I would use this as a first go-to collection for an accessible, open-minded and informed discussion of the many issues that impinge on public life today.

**Susie Tharu**

*Retired professor, Department of Cultural Studies, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad*

This book is very important as it is aimed at producing an alternative framework of development. In the absence of such an alternative, we remain just slogan shouters. Though, because of the attack of fascism we all are busy giving priority to save and protect whatever little democracy we are left with, it is very important to talk about radical alternatives, which this book does. I would love to take its message all over the country.

**Jignesh Mevani**

*Rashtriya Dalit Adhikar Manch*

We are mired today in the age of precarity, of loss, of profound injustice and unimaginable violence. And we are trapped in the debilitating fictions of post-truth rule; in tweets that supplant rich traditions of argumentation, dissent and disagreement; and in the utter disregard for life, liberties, dignity, equality, diversity, self-respect, fraternity and pluralism – indeed privacy and constitutional morality – guaranteed under our Constitution. *Alternative Futures: India Unshackled* restores our faith in the power of dreams: daring us to dream of insurgent constitutionalism, and resurrecting memories of other worlds, other times, that we must reclaim for our present and our futures.

**Kalpana Kannabiran**

*Feminist sociologist & writer*

With over 600 vibrant pages, from Shiv Vishwanathan's future dreaming to Manisha Gupte's revisionings of sex-gender – via water and energy abundance, food sovereignty, craft economies, language and learning, dissent and self-governance – the intellectuals and activists in this book not only model Indian futures, they will lead readers in the West to new imaginaries.

**Ariel Salleh**

*Political Economy, University of Sydney & Author of "Ecofeminism as Politics"*